

Charms of Northern Japan: Cherry Blossom Tour 2017 - 5/4

The must see sights of Hokkaido & Tohoku...plus cherry blossom in Spring

Tour Code: GTA1021089

Tour Information

Land cost: from USD \$3198

Single supplement: USD \$640

Tour duration: 9 days 8 nights

Destination:

*Sapporo / Otaru / Shiraoi / Noboribetsu / Lake Toya /
 Hakodate / Seikan Tunnel / Aomori / Towada / Morioka /
 Hiraizumi / Matsushima / Nikko*

Tour cost includes:

- 5 nights Western style and 3 nights Japanese style accommodation
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Chitose Airport
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- Private coach transfers between destinations in Japan
- Comprehensive escorted with AJT professional English speaking tour guide
- Gratuities

Meals

- Breakfast everyday
- 6 lunches and 4 dinners

Admission fees and activities

- All entry fees to sites, activities listed in the itinerary

Dates & Price

2017

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Thu. May 4, 2017	Fri. May 12, 2017	USD \$3198.00	Sapporo	Tokyo	Deluxe	View Tour

2018

Start Date	End Date	Twin / Triple	Start City	End City	Style	Status
Fri. May 4, 2018	Sat. May 12, 2018	USD \$3198.00	Sapporo	Tokyo	Deluxe	View Tour

Itinerary

Tour Code: GTA1021089

Day 1 Chitose Airport

Welcome to Sapporo! An AJT representative will meet you at the arrival gate and direct you to the hotel.

Hotel:

ANA Crowne Plaza Hotel Chitose or similar class

NOTE 1: The meet and greet is ONLY available for flights arriving after 11:00 AM.

Day 2 Otaru (Otaru Canal / Sakaimachi Street - Kitaichi Garasukan - Otaru Music Box Museum), Sapporo (Clock Tower / Odori Park / Susukino)

In the morning we will travel to Otaru, renowned for its canals and glassblowing in Kitaichi Garasukan. During the first half of the 20th century, the Otaru Canal was a vital part of the city's busy harbor. The canal allowed large vessels to be unloaded onto smaller ones, then transported to local warehouses. Although the canal became obsolete when modern dock facilities allowed for the direct unloading of large vessels, the canal remains an integral part of the city's history and culture. As part of a citizen's movement in the 1980s, the canal was beautifully restored and former warehouses have been transformed into cafes, restaurants, museums, and shops. Next, we will visit glass workshops and Music Box Museum in Sakaimachi Street. In the afternoon, we will visit Sapporo city. The tour includes a visit to the Sapporo Clock Tower and Odori Park, where you can stroll along the promenade. The next stop is Susukino, Hokkaido's largest entertainment district. In the evening is for you to enjoy your free time.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

ANA Hotel Sapporo or similar class

Day 3 Sapporo (Nijo Market / Historic Village), Shiraoi (Ainu Village), Noboribetsu (Jigokudani)

In the morning our tour of Sapporo continues with a visit to the Nijo Market, where you will see a variety of fresh, local fruits and vegetables. Next is a visit to the Historic Village, you can view architecture from the Meiji and Taisho periods when Japan experienced rapid expansion. Today we get the opportunity to learn about the Ainu, the indigenous people of northern Japan. At the Shiraoi Ainu Village, you will experience an authentic Ainu performance with music, dancing, and singing. In the afternoon, we will stop at Hokkaido's most famous hot spring resort, Noboribetsu Onsen. The valley generates 10,000 tons of bubbling water everyday, and visitors can walk to the nearby Oyunuma Lake and watch the plumes of steam rise. Tonight we will stay in a traditional Japanese style hotel in Noboribetsu offering hot spring baths.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Noboribetsu Manseikaku or similar class

Day 4 Lake Toya (Usuzan Ropeway), Onuma Park, Hakodate (Fort Goryokaku / Mt Hakodate Ropeway)

After breakfast, we will head to Lake Toya and take the Usuzan Ropeway to the observation deck and have a panoramic view of Lake Toya and neighboring Showa Shinzan. Along the way we stop at the Lake Onuma before arrive in Hakodate. Hakodate was one of the first Treaty Ports in Japan which opened up to world trade in 1854, so there are many preserved buildings around the area from that time. We will continue our tour to visit Goryokaku Pentagonal Fort, built in 1868 and the only structure of its kind in Japan. The surrounding moat and defensive grounds are now a city park and gardens. In the evening, we will take a ropeway ride up to Mt Hakodate from where we can look down upon the twinkling lights that surround Hakodate Bay. The view from the mountain are spectacular and it's listed as Japan's three best night view alongside with the view from Nagasaki's Mount Inasa and Kobe's Mount Rokko.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Loisir Hotel Hakodate or similar class

Day 5 Undersea Train from Hakodate to Aomori (Nebuta Warasse), Towada (Lake Towada / Oirase Gorge)

Today we will travel across the Tsugaru Channel between the islands of Hokkaido and Honshu by train via the undersea train tunnel, before arriving to Aomori. We will visit the Nebuta Warasse, a well done museum about the Nebuta Matsuri in Aomori. Then we will visit Japan's third deepest lake - Lake Towada, a volcanic crater lake 44 km in circumference. We will go for a nature walk along the creek through Oirase Gorge. Over a dozen waterfalls cascade down into the stream all along its length from the walls of the gorge. The stream flows along the floor of the Oirase Gorge, winding among trees which are lush green in spring and summer and turn brilliant shades of red, yellow and orange from late October through early November.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Towadako Lake View Hotel or similar class

Day 6 Morioka (Morioka Handi - Works Square), Hiraizumi (Chusonji Temple)

In the morning we head to Morioka for a visit to the Morioka Handi-Works Square, a facility where you can “see, touch, and create” various traditional craftworks and foods of Morioka. Then, visit to Hiraizumi for a cultural interlude and to stroll around the magnificent Japanese Cedar Trees and photogenic buildings at Chusonji Temple. Hiraizumi is now listed as a World Heritage site and is home to Konjiki-do (Golden Hall) within Chusonji Temple, which attempts to re-create an ideal Buddhism world. As such, it is host to an ensemble of exquisite "culture of gold" remnants from the brand of Buddhism that developed independently in the Tohoku region far away from the cultural center of Kyoto in the late Heian era of the 11th century. UNESCO has recognized this area as being a globally rare example of local culture to manifest on such a high level in the transitional period from the ancient era to the medieval period. Tonight we will stay in Matsushima where we will have dinner in the hotel.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch / Dinner

Hotel:

Matsushima Taikanso or similar class

Day 7 Matsushima (Matsushima Cruise / Godaido / Zuiganji Temple)

Today you will be visiting Matsushima, a picturesque bay full of pine tree covered small islands, where we explore ancient caves once frequented by meditating monks. Matsushima is famous for being one of Japan's three most scenic views alongside Miyajima and Amanohashidate. The bay is dotted by over 200 small islands covered by pine trees. We will take the best way to view the islands by boarding one of the sightseeing boat. We will then visit Godaido and Zuiganji Temple, the most famous in the Tohoku region, that was built by Date Masamune and is designated as a national treasure. Tonight, we will stay in the Onsen Ryokan at Kinugawa Onsen, where you can soak in the therapeutic water of a spa bath and feast on a traditional Japanese Kaiseki banquet dinner.

Meals:

Breakfast / Dinner

Hotel:

Kinugawa Onsen Hotel or similar class

Day 8 Nikko (Toshogu Shrine / Futarasan-Shrine / Rinnoji Temple / Kegon Waterfall / Lake Chuzenji)

After a Japanese breakfast at the ryokan, we will start a tour of Nikko. The shrines and temples of Nikko, together with their natural surroundings, have for centuries been closely associated with the history of the Tokugawa Shoguns. We will visit the lavishly decorated Toshogu Shrine set in a grove of magnificent ancient Japanese cedars. Then, visit Futarasan-Shrine and the Rinnoji complex of Buddhist temples founded in 766 BC by the Buddhist hermit Shoto. Next is a visit to the Lake Chuzenji and Kegon Waterfall. The almost 100 meter tall Kegon Waterfall is the most famous of Nikko's many beautiful waterfalls. In fact, it is even ranked as one of Japan's three most beautiful falls, along with Nachi Waterfall in Wakayama Prefecture and Fukuroda Waterfall in Ibaraki Prefecture. In the evening, we will proceed to Tokyo for a night stay before your return flight on the next day.

Meals:

Breakfast / Lunch

Hotel:

Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu or similar class

Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo or similar class (NOTE 2 & 3)

NOTE 2: If you wish to stay in the center of Tokyo for the last night instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu, we can arrange for you to stay at Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo (or similar class). In this case, airport transfer is not included, but we will provide full instructions for you to get to the airport in advance.

NOTE 3: If you will be flying out from Haneda Airport (HND) instead of Narita Airport (NRT), we can arrange for you to stay at Tobu Hotel Levant Tokyo (or similar class) instead of Narita Excel Hotel Tokyu. In this case, airport transfer is not included but we will provide full instructions for you to get to the airport in advance.

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Day 9 Tour End

After breakfast, our tour officially ends. Checkout time is 11 am and Narita Airport can be reached by hotel shuttle bus.

Meals:
Breakfast

NOTE 4: If you would like to stay longer in Japan, please contact us to book hotel accommodations.